

Traverse County Commission
Regular Board Meeting
September 19, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Commission Chair Kayla Schmidt. Other Commissioners present were Mark Gail, Dwight Nelson, Jerrel Olson and Chad Metz. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The agenda was approved unanimously with the following addition: Addendum to the TCC/PVP lease and reclassification of the Deputy Assessor II position, upon a motion by Metz and second by Olson. There was no conflict of interest expressed. The September 5, 2023, Board minutes were unanimously approved upon a motion by Gail and second by Nelson.

Highway Department

Chad Gillespie, Traverse County Highway Engineer, and Brian Koch County Highway Supervisor appeared before the Board with a department update. Gillespie had only informational items, they met with the State Aid Engineer on the CSAH 20 078-620-020 Federal project for inspection. The 2024 Grading Project 078-615-011 CSAH 15 plans have been submitted to State Aid for review. Gillespie will give a project highlight at a later date. The bridge inspections are underway, they are having a Snooper Truck come for 2 days with a State Aid Bridge Inspection liaison to get a better look at some of our bridges. Gillespie met with the gravel lease landowner to discuss the current lease that ends in 2025 and the possibility of making another lease. There is a FEMA meeting for this year's flood on Thursday, September 21. Gillespie is working with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Army Corp on permitting for the County Park Parking lot.

Traverse Gap Wind Project

Scott Seier, Tenaska, gave the Board an overview on the Traverse Gap Wind Project. Cordelio Power and Tenaska are actively developing a wind project in Traverse County. They are currently discussing voluntary lease agreements with interested landowners. If there isn't enough interest they will pull out of the project. An economic impact statement will be done by Tenaska and will be made available once it is done. Cordelio Power and Tenaska will ensure local leaders and the public stay informed throughout the development process by sharing information as it becomes available. There were many follow up questions, comments and concerns from the public.

Zoning Administrator

Ben Oleson, Zoning Administrator appeared before the Board to address and consider for adopting Section 24 of the Land Use Ordinance, Recording of Deeds Involving Subdivision of Land and Section 25 Subdivision of Land Ordinance. These changes were recommended for approval by the Planning Commission, Oleson worked with the County staff on the changes and then it got put on hold along with the other Ordinance changes because of the Wind and Solar issues. We have had a few instances where people want to split their land and we want the proposed ordinance in place as it will make things easier for the land owners and for County offices. County Attorney Matt Franzese suggested that we adopt these two sections. Nelson made a motion to approved both Section 24 and Section 25 of the Land Use Ordinance with a second by Metz and approved unanimously.

Auditor/Treasurer

Auditor/Treasurer Kit Johnson appeared before the Board with a department update. Johnson informed the board that our bond rating through Moody's didn't change. We received a payment from the Department of Revenue for Public Safety Aid in the amount of \$63,015.00, Johnson will add that to the

budget as we hadn't budgeted for it yet. Johnson will be attending Election Training Thursday and Friday this week. Johnson went over the current budget increase over last year which is at 18.97%. There were a couple of changes from the last time the budget was brought to the Board, we received our health insurance increase which was more than anticipated. Sheriff Wright increased his jail board revenues and decreased the part-time Deputies by half. Schmidt looked at the amount surrounding counties give for their County Fair. We are just above Wilkin County but lower than Big Stone, Grant and Stevens. Currently we allocate to the County Fair \$12,500.00 per year. Olson said that if we base it on the population we are right at the average. Schmidt said she proposes that we increase the amount we give to the Traverse County Fair. Johnson said that from 2003 – 2016 it was \$10,000.00, 2017 it went to \$15,000.00 and in 2018 and 2019 it went back to \$10,000.00. In 2020 to present it has been \$12,500.00. Nelson wouldn't be opposed to raising it, Olson said we are sitting at a 18.97% increase over last year so every dollar counts. Nelson made a motion to increase the allocation to the Traverse County Fair to \$15,000.00, second by Metz, discussion followed. Metz asked if we should wait to make this decision until the Fair Board Chair comes to give the 2023 report and see if they need it. The motion passed 3 – 2 with Olson and Gail opposed. With the increase to the fair it puts the increase over 2023 at 19.01%. Schmidt asked Johnson about the fund balance, Johnson explained that the fund balance comes from when departments come in under budget, the money not spent goes into the fund balance. Johnson said that for the past two years we have been receiving COVID money and if we used it for things that were levied than we put that money into the fund balance. Johnson said that if the Commissioners decided to use fund balance this would be the year to do it. If we use \$600,000.00 of fund balance it brings the increase over 2023 to 9.6%. Johnson said that the goal is to keep the increases steady, he said that this doesn't have to be our final levy we just can't set the final levy higher than the preliminary levy. The amount set for the preliminary levy will be the number on the Truth and Taxation notices that go out. Schmidt asked Wright how he increased the revenue for the out of town inmates, Wright said that he figured the numbers from last year and this year so far and it was higher than what he put in ordinarily so he increased it. Wright said the 3rd district is moving the prices for inmates up to \$70.00 next year which is an increase of \$10.00. Metz asked Wright how he came up with needing 9 officers, Wright explained that the Sheriff's Office has 6 Deputies plus himself and the City of Wheaton had 3 Officers which is a total of 9 Deputies. Metz said that other counties that have a bigger area are using less officers. Wright asked Metz for that data so he could take a look at it. Olson made a motion to use \$300,000.00 from the Revenue Fund and \$300,000.00 from the Social Services Fund and to set the preliminary levy at \$6,989,538.27 which is a 9.6% increase over last year, second by Gail followed by discussion, Schmidt said she is nervous using that much fund balance, the Department Heads need to come up with areas to cut. The motion passed 4-1 with Schmidt opposed.

County Coordinator

Upon motion by Gail and second by Olson the following bills were approved unanimously.

BRANDON COMMUNICATIONS	\$9,093.50
CHS	\$2,554.93
CONTECH ENGINEERED SOLUTIONS, LLC	\$20,872.00
HANCOCK CONCRETE PRODUCTS CO.	\$5,843.45
HOUSTON ENGINEERING, INC.	\$11,673.75
JOHN DEERE FINANCIAL	\$2,125.57
KELLEN/RYAN – 54K LLC	\$16,640.00
LG EVERIST INC.	\$2,463.10

LARSON OIL, INC	\$24,188.30
LOCATORS & SUPPLIES, INC.	\$4,240.36
MARK SAND & GRAVEL DAKOTA CO	\$12,151.38
NORTH CENTRAL INTERNATIONAL, LLC	\$3,741.64
SCHMITZ/TODD	\$10,107.50
SWANSTON EQUIPMENT CO.	\$4,800.00
TRI COUNTY COOP OIL ASSOC	\$4,278.26
TWIN VALLEY TIRE WHEATON, INC	\$3,410.40
WAGNER COMPANY INC	\$109,521.30
WHALEY EXCAVATING, INC.	\$19,513.50
ZIEGLER, INC.	\$6,774.43
ANDERSON LAW OFFICE, PA	\$2,820.00
BALLARD SPAHR LLP	\$5,373.00
COUNTIES PROVIDING TECHNOLOGY	\$5,235.36
ELAN FINANCIAL SERVICES	\$7,800.15
ELLINGSON PLUMBING, HTG & AC	\$3,574.25
HORMANN/MARK	\$2,000.00
MORRIS ELECTRONICS	\$4,074.15
QUADIENT FINANCE USA, INC.	\$2,000.00

Per M.S. 375.12, the number of claims totaling \$2,000.00 or less were 57 in the amount of \$27,300.22.

County Attorney Matt Franzese was unable to make the meeting today so he asked that we table the discussion on an ordinance regarding cannabis use and sales in Traverse County until the next meeting. Schmidt said that at the Horizon Public Health meeting the County Attorneys should be getting templates in the near future for cannabis.

Lisa Zahl, County Coordinator, informed the Board that the retiree health insurance increased approximately 7% and the employee health insurance on the core plan increased 16.39%, this is the plan that we set the County rates off of. The H.S.A plan had an increase of 32.84%, because of this increase Zahl met with the Insurance Committee to see about adding a different plan. The Insurance Committees recommendation is to drop the \$400.00 deductible plan and grandfather the one employee that is on that plan and add two other H.S.A plans. We are not changing our Core plan as that is the one that is in the union contracts. Zahl would like to meet with the Insurance Committee again and lock down which two H.S.A plans they would like to add. The Insurance Committee discussed going out for bids, however our Health Insurance Consultant said we wouldn't get the bids back until November and we would miss our open enrollment window. The Insurance Committees recommendation would be to go out for bids early next year. Nelson made a motion to drop the \$400.00 deductible plan and grandfather the one employee in and to add 2 other H.S.A plans as the Insurance Committee deems appropriate, second by Gail and approved unanimously.

Schmidt explained the reason for the addendum to the TCC/PVP lease, because of the time frame in getting the licenses from the State and Medicare switched over to Minnewaska's name and avoid any disruption in the operations Minnewaska has asked that we do an addendum to the lease agreement and allow them to sublease to Legacy Senior Services for up to 3 months until all the licenses get switched over. Olson made a motion to amend the contract with a second from Nelson and approved unanimously.

County Assessor Dianne Reinart appeared before the Board to ask approval to add a Chief Deputy Assessor position. She explained that she has talked with the Personnel Committee regarding this position and why it is needed. She is not adding another person she is just asking for this position to be added due to Kayla Kleindl, Deputy Assessor II getting her Senior Accredited Minnesota Assessor License and the added duties that have come with taking over the assessing for 6 townships and 3 cities since 2019. Zahl explained that she spoke with Big Stone County who also has this position and they added it due to the same situation. The reclassification came back at a Grade 17. Upon a motion by Metz and second by Nelson the job description, position and moving Kayla Kleindl to this position contingent on the union approval of the grading of the position were approved unanimously.

Public Comment Period

There was no public comments.

Committee Reports

Nelson attended Primewest, Western Prairie, Horizon Public Health, Personnel Committee, Building Committee, Soil and Water and Planning and Zoning.

Schmidt attended Horizon Public Health, Building Committee, Bois de Sioux Water Shed, HRA and Preplacement.

Metz attended the Wind and Solar Sub Committee.

Schmidt adjourned the meeting at 12:01 p.m.

Lisa Zahl, County Coordinator

Kayla Schmidt, Chair